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TO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 5742

RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN IMMEDIATE 9511

RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE 2822

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 3548

RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN IMMEDIATE 9844

RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV IMMEDIATE 9179

RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 2145

RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE 3934

RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE 2874

RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE IMMEDIATE 9527

RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE 9509

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 9902

RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE 7194

RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE IMMEDIATE 4420

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 7741

RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW IMMEDIATE 2956

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 4220

INFO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 012948

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/11/2019

TAGS: [TSPA](#) [TPSL](#)

SUBJECT: COLLISION OF U.S. IRIDIUM AND RUSSIAN COSMOS
SATELLITES IN ORBIT

CLASSIFIED BY: ISN A/S Eliot Kang, Reasons: 1.4 (b) and
(d)

11. (U) THIS IS AN IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUEST. SEE
PARAGRAPHS 3, 4, and 6.

12. (S) BACKGROUND: At approximately 11:55 a.m. (EST) on
February 10, there was a collision between an active
privately-owned and -operated U.S. commercial Iridium-33
communications satellite and a "dead" (i.e., inactive
since 1995) Russian military communications satellite
(Cosmos 2251) in low Earth orbit.

(S) There have been some limited telephone disruptions in
the Middle East and parts of South Asia due to the loss
of the Iridium-33 satellite. The Cosmos 2251 was a
Russian communications satellite that was launched in
June 1993 and assessed as inactive since 1995. U.S.
Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) is investigating the
collision, but details may not be forthcoming for days.

(S) News reports of the collision are already out. The
U.S. Air Force's Space Surveillance Network is tracking
505 pieces from Cosmos and 194 pieces from Iridium in two
separate debris fields. The number of pieces of debris
detected and tracked will increase as the debris clouds
spread with time. The debris is a hazard for other
Iridium satellites; initial analysis indicates there is
little risk to the International Space Station.
Potential risks to non-U.S. space-based assets and
upcoming manned and unmanned launches are unknown at this
time. Due to the small mass of the debris pieces from
both spacecraft, there is an extremely low risk of debris
hazards to life and property on the Earth's surface.

(SBU) According to NASA, Russian debris experts have
already asked NASA experts about newly-identified debris

fields. In a public statement, Nicholas Johnson, NASA's chief scientist for orbital debris at the Johnson Space Center confirmed the collision occurred in space at an altitude of 790 kilometers (490 miles) over northern Siberia, resulting in a large amount of debris from both objects.

(SBU) The U.S. follows safe practices for the operation and disposal of spacecraft, upon the end of their useful service life, and to mitigate debris that may threaten other spacecraft, including manned flight. The U.S. encourages other nations to follow the established principles outlined in existing treaties and international agreements for the peaceful use of outer space. This includes the use of best practices, and transparency and confidence building measures, which should be conducted on a bilateral and multilateral basis, as appropriate.

END BACKGROUND.

13. (SBU) GUIDANCE FOR BERLIN, BRUSSELS, CANBERRA, LONDON, OTTAWA, PARIS (FOR HOST NATION OFFICIALS AND THE EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY), ROME, TOKYO, BEIJING, KYIV, PRAGUE, COPENHAGEN, TEL AVIV, WARSAW, SEOUL, THE HAGUE, USEU (FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION), USNATO (FOR NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL): POSTS ARE REQUESTED TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO PROMPTLY DELIVER THE U.S. TALKING POINTS IN PARAGRAPH 5 TO APPROPRIATE HOST COUNTRY OFFICIALS.

14. (SBU) GUIDANCE FOR EMBASSY MOSCOW: PLEASE REFER TO SEPTTEL (120535Z February 09) FOR SPECIFIC GUIDANCE.

STATE 00012948 002 OF 002

15. (U) U.S. TALKING POINTS ON THE COLLISION OF THE U.S. IRIDIUM AND RUSSIAN COSMOS SATELLITES IN SPACE:

-On February 10, a collision occurred involving an active U.S. commercial Iridium-33 satellite and an inactive Russian satellite (Cosmos 2251) in low Earth orbit.

-The United States and Russian Federation are in communication with each other regarding the collision.

-U.S. Strategic Command is currently investigating the events leading up to the collision, and details may not be forthcoming for many days while the analysis of the event continues.

-As of late yesterday, the U.S. Air Force's Space Surveillance Network was tracking 505 pieces from Cosmos and 194 pieces from Iridium in two separate debris fields.

-There is little risk to the International Space Station due to orbiting debris from the collision. However, the Department of Defense and NASA are conducting further analyses on the risks due to the debris. The U.S. will provide additional notifications to foreign governments and commercial operators, if its tracking and analysis identifies safety-of-flight hazards.

-Since space is becoming an increasingly congested environment, heightened space situational awareness as well as international cooperation between governments and industry is critical in the future.

Additional talking points that may be drawn upon, as appropriate:

-U.S. Strategic Command regularly notifies users, for example, foreign governments and commercial operators, when its tracking and analysis identifies a safety-of-flight issue.

--Such analysis is primarily focused on ensuring safety of human space flight and national security missions.

-The U.S. takes its responsibility in the space domain very

seriously; we have been, and continue to be, proactive in identifying potential hazards and taking steps to preserve safety of flight in this complex environment.

-When the potential for a close approach is identified, experts analyze options for avoiding an impact, including the possibility of maneuvering a satellite if necessary and possible. The decision to maneuver always rests with the satellite operator.

-Tracking data on the debris from this collision will be included in the Joint Space Operations Center's Space Catalogue ? "<http://www.Space-track.org>" ? an unclassified U.S. Air Force internet site, within approximately 48-72 hours after the collision.

END U.S. TALKING POINTS.

16. INFO POSTS MAY USE THE TALKING POINTS IN PARAGRAPH 5 AS APPROPRIATE WITH HOST GOVERNMENTS, BUT ONLY ON AN 'IF ASKED' BASIS.
CLINTON